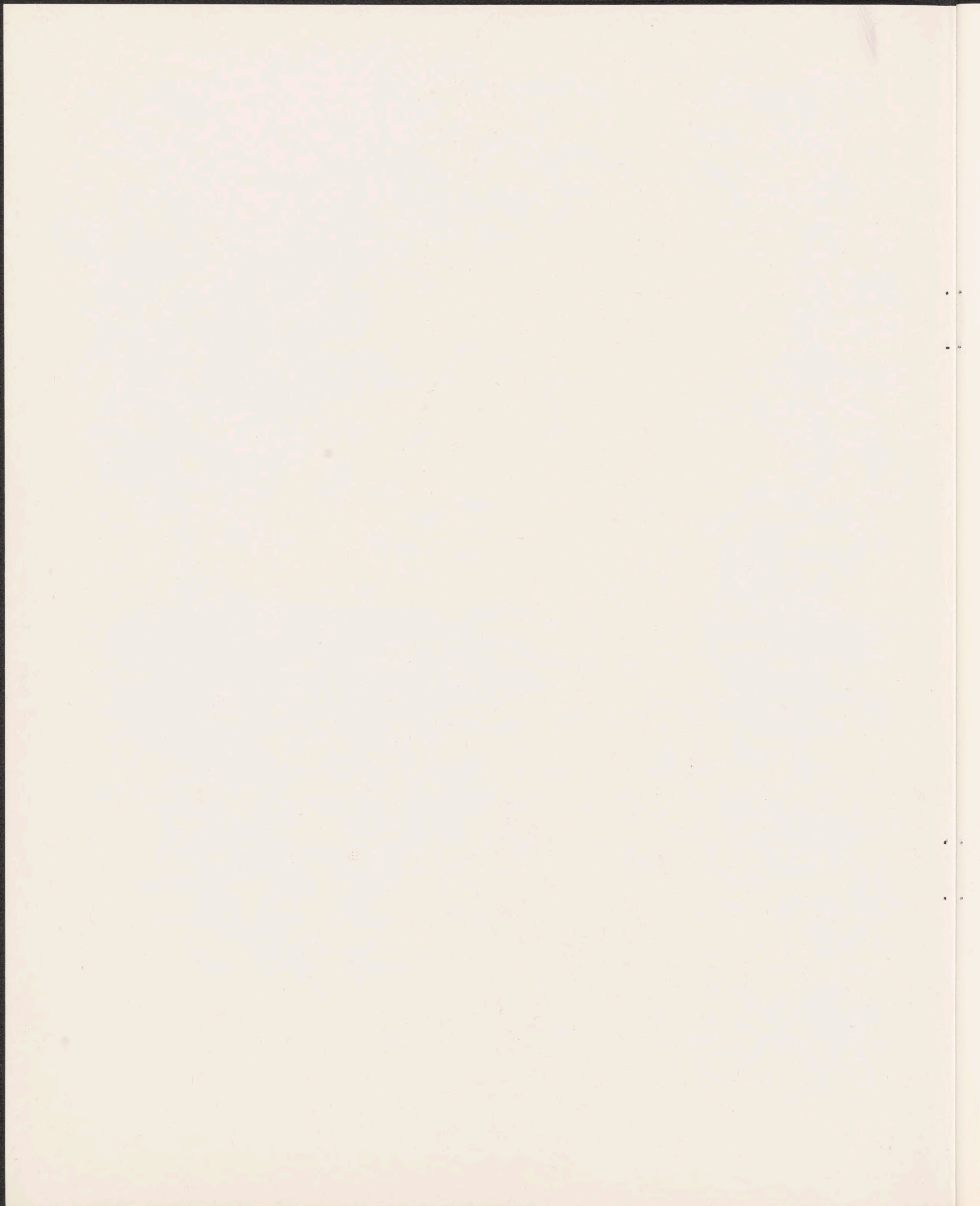




*eight painters*  
*from*  
N O R W A Y



**EIGHT PAINTERS  
FROM  
NORWAY**

**THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART**

**Washington, D. C.**

**October 6 - November 5, 1961**

**MUSEUM OF ART, MUNSON-WILLIAMS-PROCTOR INSTITUTE**

**Utica, New York**

**March 4 - April 1, 1962**

*COVER ILLUSTRATION*

KNUT RUMOHR      Composition I, 1961      *Cat. No. 28*

*Copyright 1961 by*  
THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D. C.

## foreword

During this past decade Americans have had few opportunities to see exhibitions covering any aspect of Norwegian culture. This is especially true of contemporary painting which is enjoying a period of great popularity in Norway. Only those Americans who have seen examples there or elsewhere in Europe have had the chance to study at first hand the new directions taken by Norwegian painters in the post-war period. No exhibition of their work has been seen in this country. We are happy to present in this exhibition—one of the Corcoran's international exhibitions—some representative works by contemporary Norwegian artists.

Essential assistance on many scores from many institutions and individuals in Norway as well as in the United States has been graciously tendered. We are particularly indebted to His Excellency, Paul Koht, the Ambassador from Norway, for his interest and his support. Our thanks for their unflagging and enthusiastic assistance go to Mr. Fredrik S. Wulfsberg, the former Press and Cultural Counselor of the Norwegian Embassy in Washington, and his successor, Mr. Arvid Sveum; and to the former Cultural Attaché, Mr. Anders Komnæs, and his successor, Mr. Rolf Bergendahl. For his translation of the introduction to the catalogue we are indebted to Mr. Andrew Moursund of the Norwegian Information Service in Washington.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of Cultural Relations, its Director, Dr. Erling Christophersen, and especially Mr. Hans Aanestad, Consultant to that Office, have given invaluable assistance. Mr. Peter Anker, Curator, The Norwegian Folk Museum, Oslo, and Mr. Jan Askeland, Curator of Graphic Arts, The National Gallery, Oslo, gave freely of their valuable time and knowledge. Mr. Askeland, indeed, is responsible for the perceptive introduction which accompanies the catalogue. To the Director of The National Gallery, Oslo, Dr. Sigurd Willoch, who allowed the selected paintings to be assembled and packed for overseas transportation at the Gallery, we are also very much indebted.

Our warm thanks go to the museums and individuals who made their collections available, often at great inconvenience to themselves and, above all, to the artists without whose interest and cooperation the exhibition could not have been assembled.

Among the friends of this Gallery I would like especially to thank The Honorable and Mrs. L. Corrin Strong, and Mr. and Mrs. Lansdell K. Christie for their generous financial contributions towards the expenses of the exhibition.

The exhibition from its inception has, in all its ramifications, been under the capable direction of Mr. Gudmund Vigtel of the Corcoran's staff. He toured Norway during May and June, visiting artists, collections and museums and selecting the individual works to be shown.

HERMANN WARNER WILLIAMS, JR.

*Director, The Corcoran Gallery of Art*

## *introduction*

Examples of Scandinavia's oldest art form, large realistic drawings of beasts chiseled into the mountain side, may be found in many parts of Norway. Possibly some 6000 years old, they are obviously related to the far older cave paintings of Spain and Southern France.

Some fifty centuries later, Norse artistic genius found its best expression in metal work and carved decorations. Ornamentation was the predominant art form during the Great Migrations and the subsequent Viking era. Pure painting, however, can be traced back to works of the Romanesque period although only a few fragments have been preserved.

During the 13th century Norway ranked foremost among the Scandinavian countries in sculpture and painting. The painted wooden altar fronts are, without a doubt, among the most interesting examples. An occasional painted church ceiling affords evidence that a tradition of mural painting was also flourishing in that century.

This marked the climax of Norway's ancient art history. In the following centuries, the national life suffered a progressive decline. The Black Death (around 1350) killed two-thirds of the population, accelerating the disastrous down-trend in economics and politics. And after Norway became a dependency of Denmark in the 16th century, the pictorial arts sank to a provincial level. Nevertheless, the urge for decorative expression persisted in the colorful folk arts, notably tapestries and the so-called "rose painting," painted ornamentation on rustic furnishings. These folk arts are still a living source of inspiration to our contemporary painters.

In the 19th century came the rebirth of Norwegian painting. While immigrant artists were responsible for most of the work created in Norway during the 17th and 18th centuries, it is ironic that in the early part of the 19th century Norway's young talent was forced to go abroad not only to get an education, but also to make a living. Among these young expatriates was Johan Christian Dahl (1788-1857). The fountainhead of more recent traditions in Norwegian art, he has frequently been called the "father of Norwegian painting." Although a professor at the Dresden Academy, Dahl managed to maintain close contact with his homeland which gave him so many motifs. The next generation of painters continued to journey to Germany where they remained, as had Dahl before them. But around 1880 the migrant artists began to return; the homeland was at last able to provide reasonable conditions for her artists.

Artistic bonds with the rest of Europe were not abandoned although from now on Paris became the primary goal, in many ways a fortunate turn of events. While the

German trend in art had been perhaps too literary, the French taught the Norwegians to emphasize craftsmanship and the purely plastic qualities. The new French painting of the 1880's was a revelation to the young Norwegians, and their contacts with Paris left tangible marks.

Norway became the scene of a rather active art life at the turn of the last century. Among the many talented men at that time, Edvard Munch rose above the rest. His pictures stirred up a great deal of controversy, and he was acclaimed abroad before recognition came his way at home. Objections centered primarily on his choice of subject matter. Munch's *Frieze of Life* was, to use his words, "a poem of life, death and love." His erotic motifs aroused special indignation. No serious doubts were raised about his talents, though many objected to the manner in which he used them.

In spite of the admiration accorded Munch by the younger painters, only a few Norwegians attempted to follow in his tracks. His direct influence is actually much more evident in the art of Germany and Central Europe. His highly personal mode of expression was taboo to most of his compatriots. Many undoubtedly shied away from the influence of such a powerful personality lest they become mere imitators. Most of Norway's younger artists preferred to look for impulses in Paris where, around 1910, a number of them became students of Matisse. Later, they were destined to play a significant part in the artistic life at home.

Mural painting, perhaps more than any other form, dominated Norwegian art activities between the two World Wars. Indeed, few countries offered artists so many and such lavish commissions during this period. Munch gave the impetus with his decorations in the Main Auditorium of the University of Oslo (1910-1916). Axel Revold and Per Krohg, both students of Matisse (and later professors at the Art Academy), followed his lead after World War I. They, and the somewhat younger Alf Rolfsen, have decorated so many public buildings with murals that they have been nicknamed "the Fresco Brothers" or "the Fresconelli Triplets."

Any attempt to ferret out the most typical characteristic of Norwegian art in the last 150 years inevitably leads to the romantic element which was introduced in the period of Dahl, not only in the pictorial arts but equally in literature and music. Romanticism's preoccupation with wild and unspoiled nature pointed out to Dahl the artistic potentialities of his native landscape. One might add that the well-to-do citizens who sent Dahl, the pauper, off to the Academy in Copenhagen, were also inspired by a deep romantic faith in the native genius, particularly the dormant genius of the people.

In subsequent decades, romanticism has permeated all manifestations of Norwegian art. It has assumed different shapes as generations and their artistic ideas have changed, but it has rarely if ever been lost. More often than not, Norwegian romanticism is ex-

pressed in a predilection for nature which may be traced all the way down to some of our young abstract painters. Just as the impact of nature was the main source of inspiration to the classical Johan Christian Dahl, so also has it served the contemporary Jakob Weidemann, to mention just two extremes in style and form.

The works of *Jakob Weidemann* might perhaps most readily be classified as abstract art, but the sources of his inspiration are clearly revealed in their titles. His pictures recreate impressions of nature—not the grand vistas admired by tourists, but forest ground with autumn leaves and moss, rocks and bark, twigs and heather. Through the use of heavy layers of paint he has found pictorial equivalents for the substance and color of these natural elements.

One might also describe *Knut Rumohr* as a romanticist. The starting point of his pictures is more often a mood than an action, a memory image rather than an idea. In the process of creation, the artist's conscious control apparently yields to the subconscious and the purely emotional. His art form, at one time literal and with a pronounced tendency towards an ornamental simplification of visual elements, has gradually become expressively abstract, with objective shapes dissolved and transformed to the point of non-recognition. His coloring has developed in the direction of an ever simpler and purer timbre, with occasional reminders of Norway's decorative folk art.

Far more conscious in his use of pictorial effects is *Thore Heramb*. To him, a visual sensation is essential as a point of departure, but it is reworked into geometrical shapes and harmonic color tones. Originally low-keyed, his pictures have of late been largely based on pure, primary hues. Heramb's talent for construction is especially apparent in several important murals in Oslo.

*Gunnar S. Gundersen* and *Odd Tandberg* have gone completely over to geometrical composition. They, too, have had the opportunity to decorate large walls, where perhaps this art form can be shown to its best advantage. The mathematical severity and objectivity of their pictures are rather rare phenomena in Norwegian art which at times has been far too much dominated by emotions.

For a while, *Ludvig Eikaas* was also preoccupied with non-objective painting, concentrating on purely geometrical shapes and lines and simple colors. Now, however, his point of departure is a visual sensation as often as not, and his art is more and more shaping up as a kind of abstract impressionism, marked by quick, nervous brush strokes and simple, refined color schemes.

*Inger Sitter*, whose style in the beginning was comparatively realistic—severe in drawing and composition and spartan in color—has steadily and naturally developed towards an ever more abstract form, though at first without completely giving up an

external point of departure. Among her best works are paraphrases of sand polished, naked rock formations of Norway's coastal skerries. Of late her forms have become ever looser, and experiments with new materials are more pronounced.

*Finn Christensen* is considered as one of the most promising among Norway's younger painters, although he originally made his name as a graphic artist. He prefers etching to other techniques. But his lively interest in the strictly technical possibilities of the material, which is coupled with a strong urge for expression, never degenerates into purely decorative play. He, too, has evolved naturally from figurative art to strict abstraction.

The Norwegian artists shown in this exhibition have one significant element in common. All have, at one time or another, executed murals, some of rather large dimensions. Curiously, none has chosen the fresco technique which dominated Norwegian mural painting between the two World Wars. Some of the works are done in the more traditional oil and tempera techniques, but Norwegian muralists have a distinct tendency to seek new materials and new forms.

Contemporary art as a whole is searching, and Norway's young artists are not exceptional in that respect. The zest for discovery combines with an urge for expression to spur the development of art, perhaps not always towards greater heights, but at any rate towards new goals. Only the future will show what is viable.

JAN ASKELAND

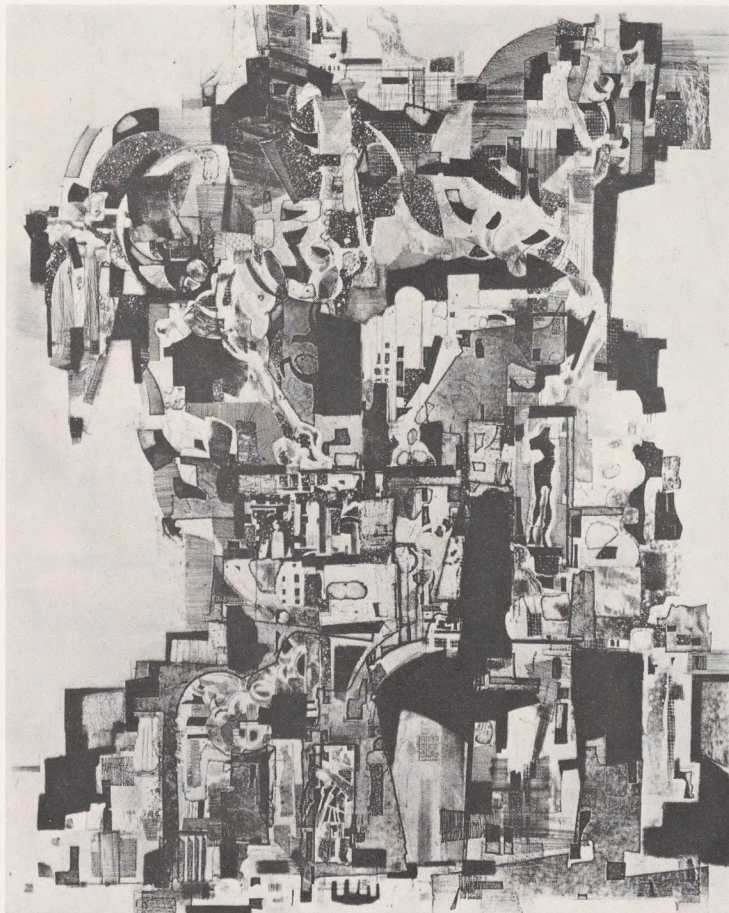


No. 4    The Mountain.    1956.    *etching*

## FINN CHRISTENSEN

Born in 1920, Finn Christensen attended the Norwegian Academy of Art for three years and went abroad to France and Italy for further studies. He received, among other grants, a traveling fellowship from the French Government. Christensen enjoys a considerable reputation as a printmaker, a field in which he is largely self-taught. He exhibits frequently and has participated in the São Paulo Biennial and many other major group exhibitions. Examples of his work are in The National Gallery, Oslo, The National Museum, Stockholm, The Public Museum of Art, Copenhagen, and a number of other collections throughout Scandinavia.

1. IMPRESSIONS FROM PARIS, 1960, oil,  $39\frac{3}{8}"$  x  $31\frac{7}{8}"$   
Lent by Mrs. Thorry Kiær, Oslo
2. ORANGE PAINTING, 1960, oil,  $28\frac{3}{4}"$  x  $23\frac{5}{8}"$   
Lent by Mrs. Thorry Kiær, Oslo
3. IMPRESSIONS FROM A CHURCH, 1960/61, oil,  $39\frac{3}{8}"$  x  $31\frac{7}{8}"$   
Lent by Mrs. Thorry Kiær, Oslo
4. THE MOUNTAIN, 1956, etching,  $18\frac{1}{8}"$  x  $22"$   
Lent by the artist
5. THE MONUMENT, 1959, etching,  $25\frac{5}{8}"$  x  $19\frac{5}{8}"$   
Lent by the artist
6. BIRD, 1960, engraving,  $16\frac{1}{2}"$  x  $18\frac{1}{2}"$   
Lent by the artist
7. BREAKAGE, 1960, etching,  $19\frac{5}{8}"$  x  $25\frac{5}{8}"$   
Lent by the artist



No. 5    The Monument.    1959.    *etching*



No. 11    The Waiting Room    1958    *oil*

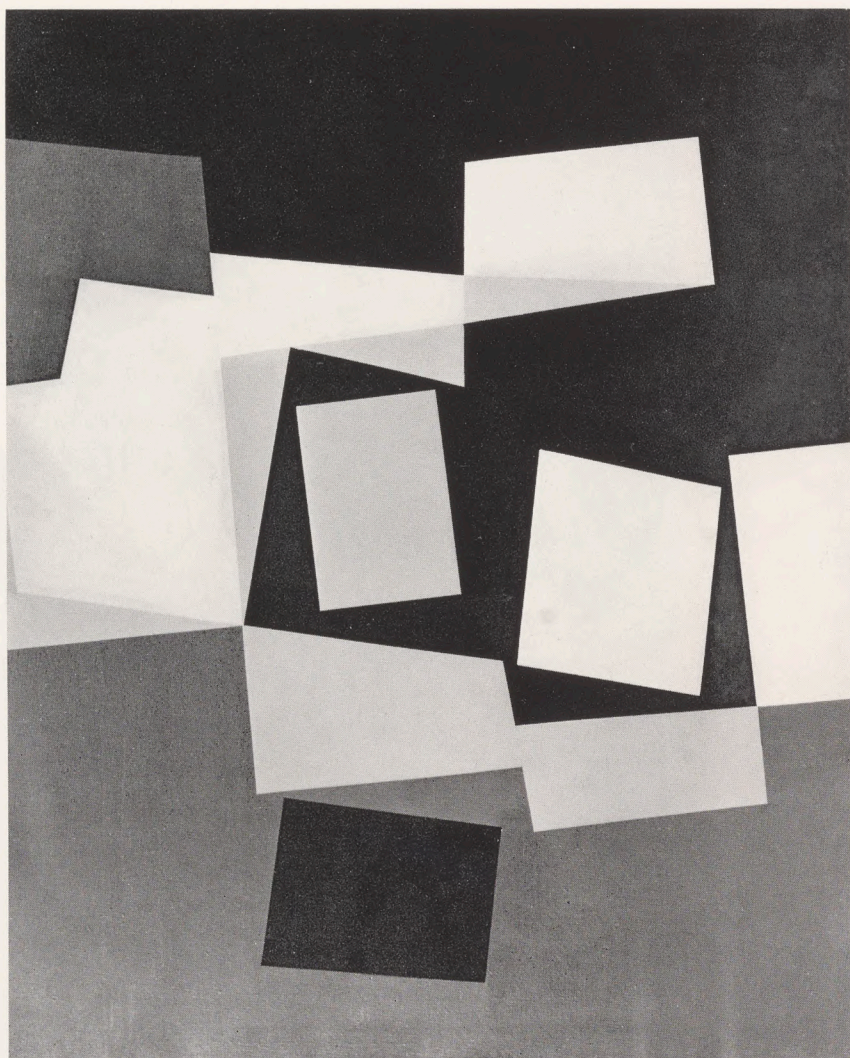
## LUDVIG EIKAAS

A versatile and prolific artist, Ludvig Eikaas works with equal enthusiasm as painter, printmaker and designer of architectural decorations. He was born in 1920 and studied at the Oslo Academy under Jean Heiberg, one of the pioneers of modern Norwegian painting who has himself been a student of Matisse. Eikaas' studies took him throughout Scandinavia as well as the Netherlands, France and Spain. Eikaas has participated in a number of mural projects and recently completed his work on modern tapestries for a restored medieval hall in Bergen. His work may be seen in a number of private and public collections, including The National Gallery, Oslo, and has been shown in such exhibitions as the Pittsburgh International and the São Paulo Biennial.

8. AT THE WINDOW, 1955, oil, 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 28"  
Lent by Galleri Haaken
9. RESTAURANT "BLOM", 1955, oil, 28" x 33 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
Lent by Galleri Haaken
10. THE WAITER, 1958 (?), oil, 31 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Private collection
11. THE WAITING ROOM, 1958, oil,  
40 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 26 $\frac{3}{8}$ "  
Lent by Galleri Haaken
12. THE WAITRESS, 1961, oil, 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 32 $\frac{1}{4}$ "  
Lent by Galleri Haaken



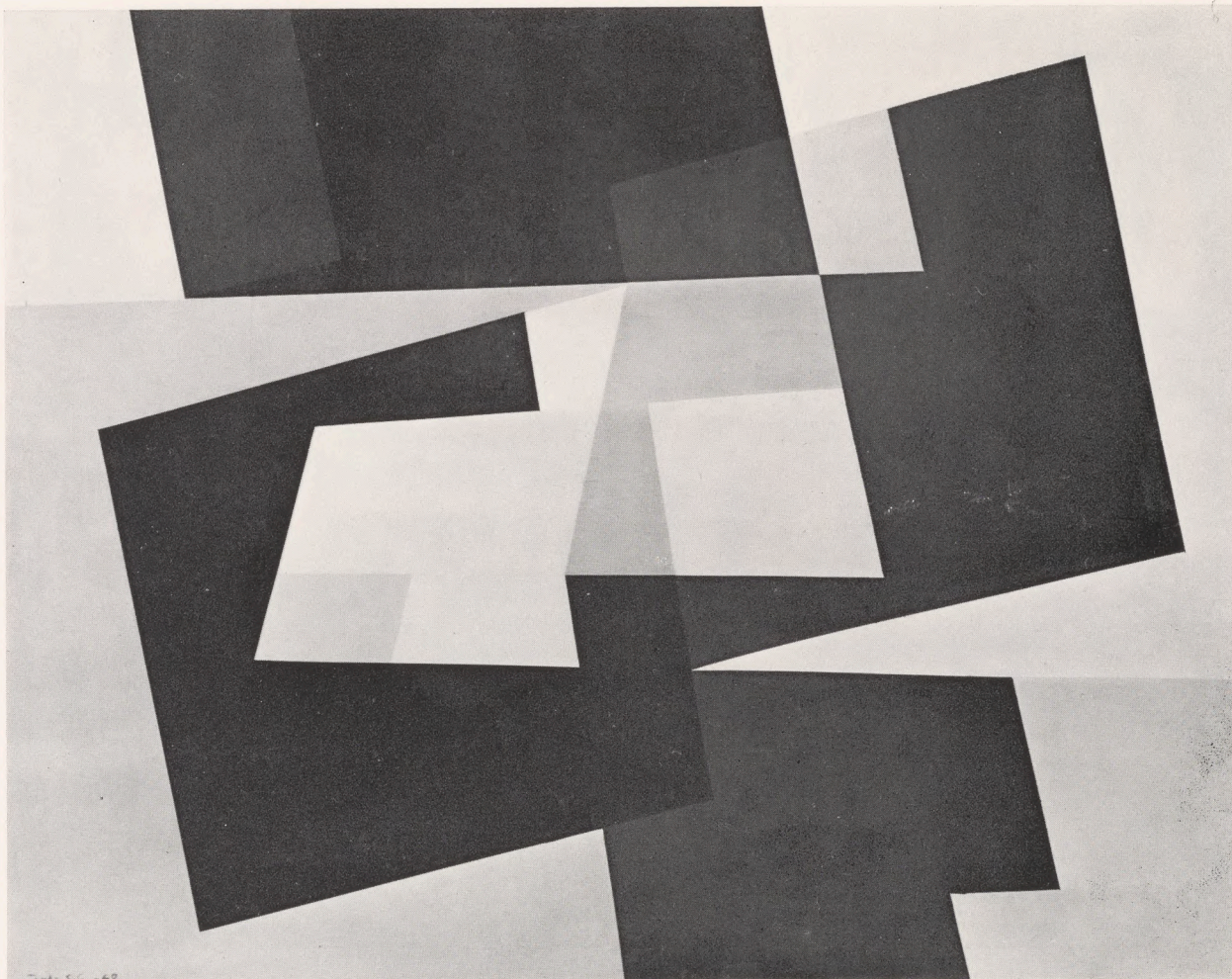
No. 8    At the Window.    1955.    oil



No. 17    Composition in Red II.    1961.    *acrylic*

## GUNNAR S. GUNDERSEN

Gunnar S. Gundersen was born in 1921. He studied at the Norwegian Art Academy and subsequently traveled in Scandinavia, France, Portugal, Belgium and The Netherlands. He has lectured extensively on non-representational art. An active teacher in painting and drawing, he has also taught courses in the principles of design at the Norwegian Institute of Technology. Gundersen has participated in a number of architectural projects. He collaborated with a group of young architects in a series of decorations for the Olympic Winter Games in Oslo in 1952. The Biennial in São Paulo and the Triennial in Milan are among the group exhibitions where his work has figured. He is represented in The National Gallery, Oslo, and other public and private collections.



No. 18    Composition in Red I.    1961.    *acrylic*

13. COMPOSITION 1, 1959, oil,  $39\frac{3}{8}''$  x  $39\frac{3}{8}''$   
Lent by Galleri Haaken

14. COMPOSITION 2, 1960, oil,  $25\frac{5}{8}''$  x  $19\frac{3}{4}''$   
Lent by Galleri Haaken

15. COMPOSITION 3, 1960, oil,  $24\frac{3}{8}''$  x  $27\frac{5}{8}''$   
Lent by Galleri Haaken

16. COMPOSITION 4, 1960, mixed medium,  $23\frac{5}{8}''$  x  $31\frac{1}{2}''$   
Lent by Galleri Haaken

17. COMPOSITION IN RED I, 1961, acrylic,  
 $31\frac{1}{2}''$  x  $39\frac{3}{8}''$   
Lent by Galleri Haaken

18. COMPOSITION IN RED II, 1961, acrylic,  
 $39\frac{3}{8}''$  x  $31\frac{7}{8}''$   
Lent by Galleri Haaken



No. 19    The Seine, Winter.    1952.    *mixed medium*

## THORE HERAMB

Born in 1916, Thore Heramb received his art training at Oslo's Art Academy and went on the traditional continental sojourn before settling down. Although essentially an easel painter, he has decorated buildings and ships. He won a competition in 1948 for the mural decorations of a public building and has since painted a mural in the dining room of one of the major newspaper buildings in the capital. As a variation of the traditional ship's figurehead, Heramb executed a painted abstract design for the prow of a ship in such a manner that it may be periodically redone by the ship's crew with numbered paints without losing any of the original pattern or color harmony. He is represented in The National Gallery, Oslo, and other public and private collections.

19. THE SEINE, WINTER, 1952, mixed medium,  
20 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 26 $\frac{3}{8}$ "  
Lent by the artist

20. DARK AUTUMN, 1953, mixed medium, 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x  
30 $\frac{3}{8}$ "  
Lent by the artist

21. YELLOW APPAREL, 1954, mixed medium,  
30 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 27"  
Private collection

22. LARGE FIGURE, 1955, tempera, 57 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Private collection

23. THE PAINTER, 1956, mixed medium, 55 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x  
25 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
Private collection

24. CHRISTINEHOLMEN, BERGEN, 1961, mixed  
medium, 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 51 $\frac{1}{8}$ "  
Lent by the artist



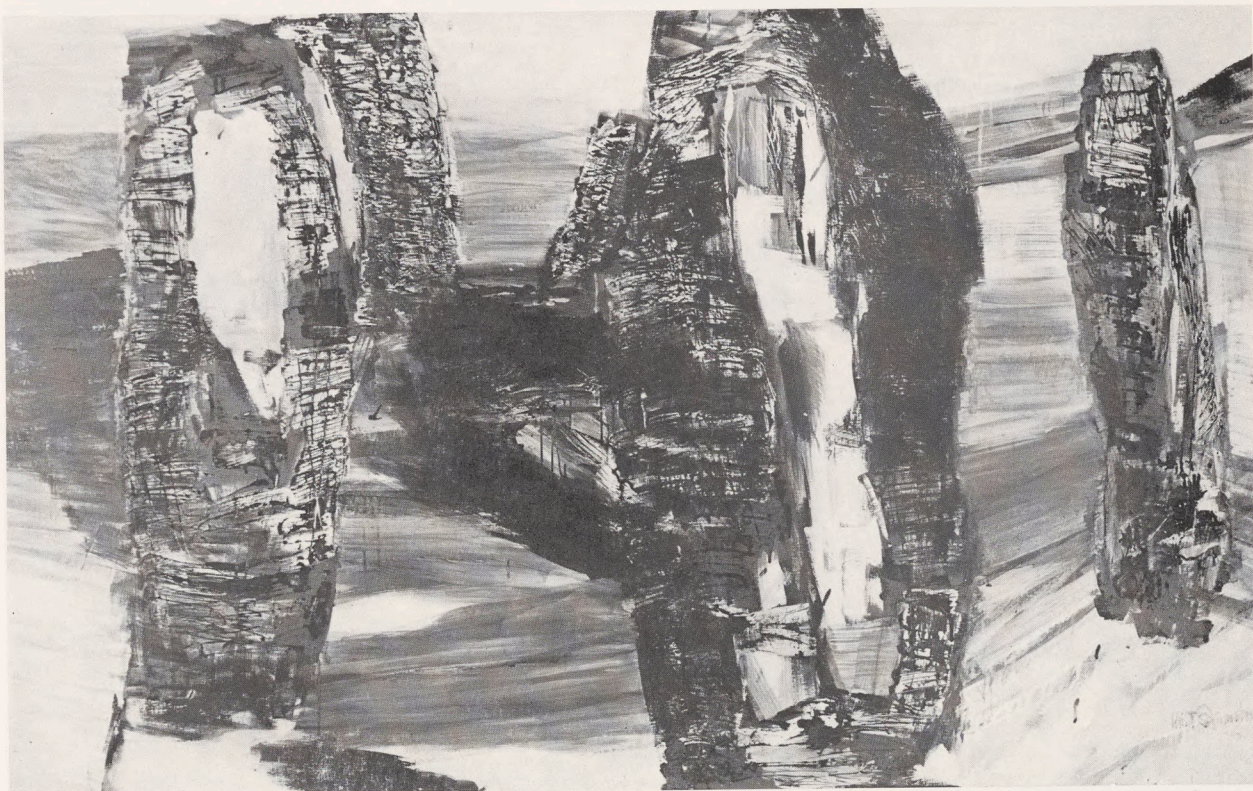
No. 24 Christineholmen, Bergen. 1961. *mixed medium*

## KNUT RUMOHR

Knut Rumohr was born in 1916. He grew up in one of the most beautiful areas of Norway's coastal region which has forever drawn him back in spite of his taste for extensive travel. An avid collector of folk art, Rumohr shows perhaps a more pronounced affinity with early Norwegian traditions than the other artists represented in this exhibition. He developed his style, first as a graphic artist, from black and white work to color lithography, and more recently as a painter. A versatile artist, he works with many media: from various printing methods to mosaics, mural painting and textile design. Rumohr has carried his expressive ornamentation into his mural decorations and the many remarkable cartoons he has executed for tapestries. His work is represented in numerous public and private collections and has been shown in several São Paulo Biennials and other group exhibitions in Paris, Rome and elsewhere.



No. 28    Composition I.    1961.    *egg tempera*



No. 27    Trees.    1960.    *egg tempera*

25. COMPOSITION, 1957, egg tempera,  $31\frac{1}{2}''$  x  $43\frac{3}{8}''$   
Lent by The Bergen Picture Gallery

28. COMPOSITION I, 1961, egg tempera,  $43\frac{3}{8}''$  x  $68\frac{7}{8}''$   
Lent by the artist

26. COMPOSITION, 1960, egg tempera,  $61''$  x  $47''$   
Lent by the artist

29. COMPOSITION A, 1961, egg tempera,  $47\frac{1}{4}''$  x  $68\frac{7}{8}''$   
Lent by the artist

27. TREES, 1960, egg tempera,  $43\frac{3}{8}''$  x  $68\frac{7}{8}''$   
Lent by the artist

30. COMPOSITION B, 1961, egg tempera,  $53\frac{1}{8}''$  x  $39\frac{3}{8}''$   
Lent by the artist



No. 35 Collage II. 1961.

## INGER SITTER

The youngest member of the group represented in this exhibition and the only woman, Inger Sitter has received a thorough art training and has acquired a considerable reputation in Norway as a painter and printmaker. In addition, she has executed murals like so many of her compatriots. Born in 1929, she studied at the art academies in Oslo and Antwerp as well as with André Lhote and Stanley Hayter in Paris. She has shown her work since she was nineteen years old. An active participant in international exhibitions, Inger Sitter is represented with work in The National Gallery, Oslo, and The National Museum, Stockholm.

31. UNTITLED I, 1958, ink and pastel,  $18\frac{1}{2}''$  x  $24\frac{1}{2}''$   
Lent by the artist

32. UNTITLED II, 1958, ink and pastel,  $24\frac{1}{4}''$  x  $18\frac{7}{8}''$   
Lent by the artist

33. UNTITLED III, 1958, ink and pastel,  $18\frac{3}{4}''$  x  $24\frac{3}{8}''$   
Lent by the artist

34. COLLAGE I, 1960, collage,  $18\frac{1}{8}''$  x  $14\frac{7}{8}''$   
Lent by the artist

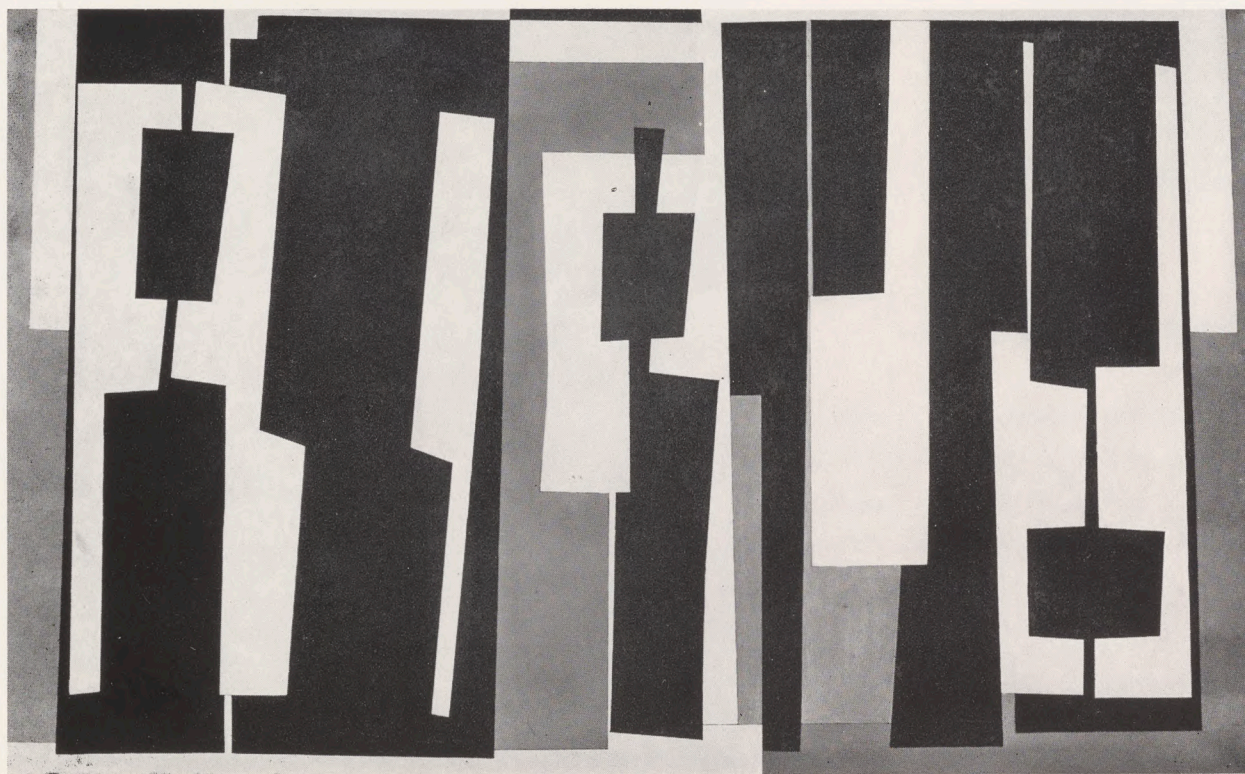
35. COLLAGE II, 1961, collage,  $17\frac{7}{8}''$  x  $21\frac{1}{2}''$   
Lent by the artist



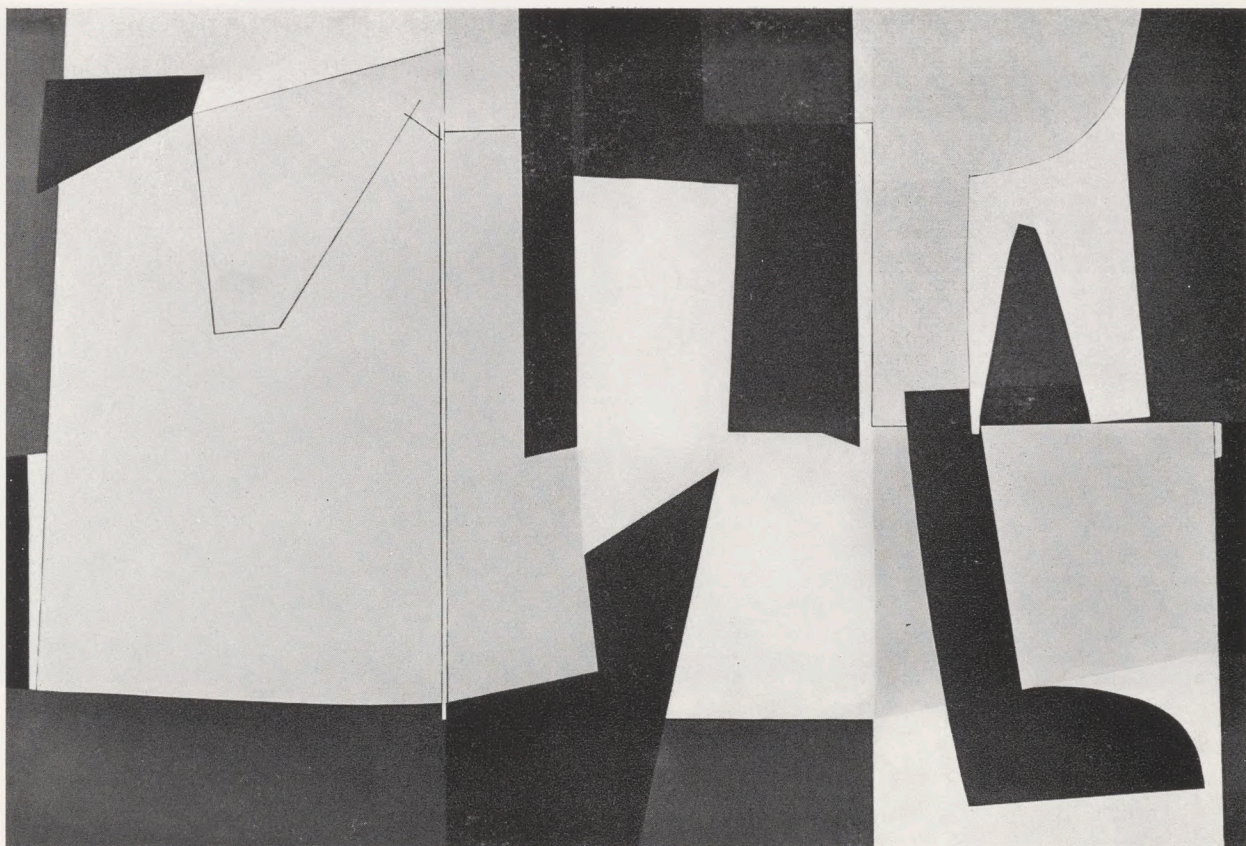
No. 32      Untitled II.      1958.      *ink and pastel*

## ODD TANDBERG

Odd Tandberg, who was born in 1924, studied at the Oslo Art Academy and in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Although he is only represented with canvases in this exhibition, he employs a wide range of media, from the conventional materials to plastics and stone. Besides taking part in numerous exhibitions, both at home and abroad, Tandberg has been involved in a number of projects ranging from textile design to mural decorations in public buildings. Together with several other Norwegian artists he was recently engaged in decorating a major government building, employing a new technique of sand-blasting abstract designs into a blend of stone and concrete. He is currently collaborating with Erling Viksjø, one of Norway's outstanding architects, in a series of experiments with the use of colored stone and concrete for the decoration of buildings.



No. 37    Composition 2.    1959.    oil



No. 40    Composition 5.    1960.    *oil*

38. COMPOSITION 1, 1958, oil,  $37\frac{1}{2}''$  x  $35''$   
Lent by Mr. O. J. Nestande, Oslo

39. COMPOSITION 4, 1960, oil,  $34\frac{5}{8}''$  x  $68\frac{1}{8}''$   
Lent by the artist

37. COMPOSITION 2, 1959, oil,  $32\frac{1}{4}''$  x  $47\frac{1}{4}''$   
Lent by the artist

40. COMPOSITION 5, 1960, oil,  $40''$  x  $57\frac{1}{2}''$   
Lent by Mr. Erling Viksjø, Oslo

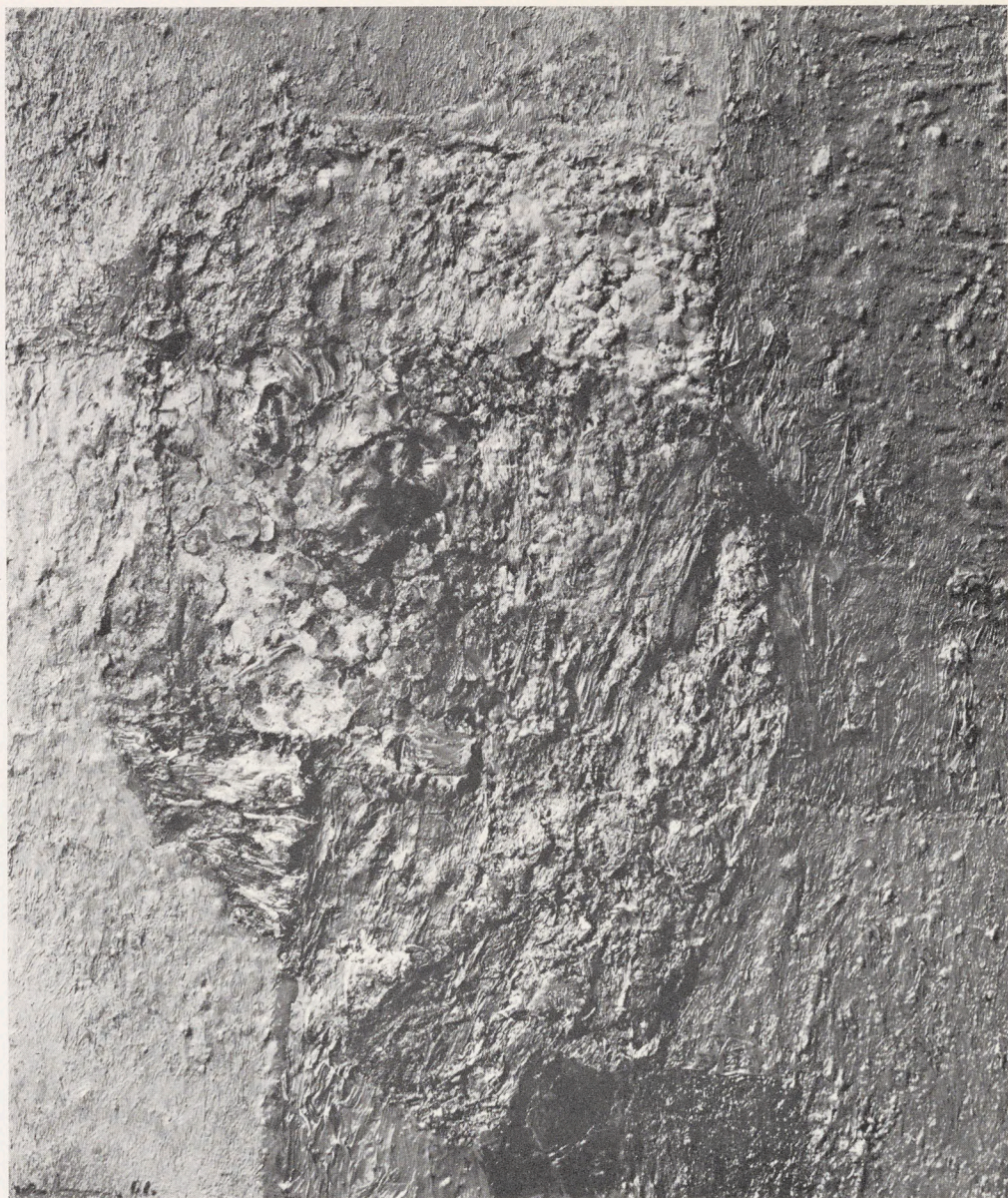
38. COMPOSITION 3, 1960, oil,  $46\frac{3}{4}''$  x  $25\frac{1}{2}''$   
Lent by Mr. Otto Torgersen, Oslo



No. 43   Pine Stump.   1960.   *mixed medium*

## JAKOB WEIDEMANN

Born in 1923, Jakob Weidemann had studied art in Norway for several years when he was forced to leave the country during the German occupation. He lived in Sweden where he studied at the Academy in Stockholm. After the war he returned to his native country and subsequently traveled extensively on the Continent. A skillful and highly prolific artist, he received recognition before he had turned twenty. He is constantly searching for different forms of expression and experimenting with new media and methods. Weidemann recently executed a mural commission which is perhaps the most ambitious project tackled by a Norwegian artist since Edvard Munch's murals for the University of Oslo almost forty years ago: four very large murals for a modern office building. He exhibits frequently, and with considerable success. His work may be found in many collections including The National Gallery, Oslo.



No. 44 From the Forest I. 1961. *mixed medium*

41. AUTUMNAL UNDERGROWTH I, 1960, mixed medium,  $31\frac{1}{2}''$  x  $39\frac{3}{8}''$   
Lent by Mr. Mads Thiis, Oslo

43. PINE STUMP, 1960, mixed medium,  $39\frac{3}{8}''$  x  $51\frac{1}{8}''$   
Lent by The National Gallery, Oslo

42. MOSS AND LEAVES, 1960, mixed medium,  $31\frac{1}{2}''$  x  $25\frac{1}{2}''$   
Lent by Mr. Herman Brinck, Oslo

44. FROM THE FOREST I, 1961, mixed medium,  $27\frac{5}{8}''$  x  $23\frac{3}{8}''$   
Lent by Mr. Fred von Krogh, Oslo

*Designed by* KURT WIENER. *Printed*  
SEPTEMBER 1961 IN THE UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA BY H. K. PRESS, WASHINGTON.

